

# STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

## BEACON HILL HOPES REDUCED CARBON EMISSIONS WILL HELP CLEAN ENERGY SECTOR

By Jim O'Sullivan  
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STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, APRIL 23, 2008.... Top Beacon Hill officials on Wednesday called for limits on greenhouse gas emissions they said would help foster the clean energy industry that policymakers are eyeing as a new economic engine.

While details of the reform await input from other states in the Northeast, the low carbon fuel standard that Gov. Deval Patrick, Senate President Therese Murray, and House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi said Massachusetts would pursue aims at "advanced" biofuels over biofuels that might contribute to food price increases.

A task force on advanced biofuels made up of lawmakers and industry leaders, convened last November, estimated that an industry based on the products could generate \$280 million to \$1 billion annually by 2025.

In a press release, Patrick, Murray and DiMasi said they would promote legislation to require all diesel and home heating fuel sold here to contain a minimum of renewable alternatives, beginning at 2 percent in 2010 to 5 percent in 2013. The bill would also exempt cellulosic ethanol from the state's 23.5-cents-per-gallon gasoline

Amid concerns that traditional biofuels are driving up food prices and don't produce the hoped-for environmental benefits, Massachusetts is focusing on non-food-based feedstocks that result in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 50 percent below fossil fuels. Products include switchgrass, tree trimmings, wood chips, algae, cranberries, willow, organic components of municipal solid waste, and the industrial oil crop crambe.

In a Tuesday speech at MIT in Cambridge, Patrick, according to a copy of his remarks provided by his press office, said, "Our state is uniquely suited to become a world center of biofuels that do not come from corn and soy but from cellulose, an abundant feedstock that comes from forestry products, the organic waste stream, and agricultural products that can be grown here in New England, like switchgrass."

The low carbon fuels standard, modeled on a California initiative that mandates fuel providers to meet mixing thresholds, would be "technology-neutral," allowing the market to determine the prevailing methods.

The report reads, "By not picking winners among technological alternatives to petroleum propulsion, the LCFS allows the best approaches to powering vehicles to win out over time, whether they be biofuels, all-electric vehicles, plug-in hybrids, or hydrogen fuel cells. Because the market for fuels in the Northeast is regional, rather than state-by-state, and the LCFS is a complex tool, it would be far preferable to implement it on a regional basis."

Environmental groups praised the announcement as a step toward reducing emissions, but warned that an implementation timeline was unclear because of the issue's complexity.

Shanna Vale, staff attorney at the Conservation Law Foundation, said, "It's something that's going to take a lot of study and data-crunching to get going, so it's hard to say how soon they'll have something in place."

Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles said Patrick would invite the other nine states in a Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative aimed at pollution control to adopt a carbon fuel standard. Currently, California is the only state that has one, and Wednesday's joint statement contained a hearty and overstated endorsement from Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who said Massachusetts was "adopting" the standard.

Bowles said the Bay State would lead a working group over the summer, compile a list of participant states by the fall, and launch a regional enterprise likely near the end of the year.

While the standard is being developed, new legislation with temporary biofuels mandates and a cellulosic biofuels state gas tax exemption should be passed, the task force recommended. To prod popular uptake, the panel pushed for new infrastructure like newfangled fuel stations on state highways. The task force wants a pilot program to convert portions of the state vehicle fleet to plug-in hybrid and all-electric vehicles.

The group also hinted at ways of cutting down on motorist travel.

"Parallel to progress on biofuels, continue to explore policy options for vehicle efficiency and reducing vehicle miles traveled," the report suggests.

The report contains recommendations for private research assistance, grants, and tax incentives.

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